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REPORT

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Standard of Living During World War II

1. A description of living conditions in Bulgaria should begin with World War II. 25X1

2. Living conditions in Bulgaria during the war years were very poor. All consumer goods and clothing were obtainable against coupons only. Food rations were very meager and hardly sufficient for existence. Black market activities were widespread, and a large number of people took advantage of the situation to accumulate considerable fortunes through profiteering. Cereal products were very rare, which was strange in view of the fact that Bulgaria is predominantly agricultural. For an entire year people subsisted on potatoes in lieu of bread twice a week.

Standard of Living After World War II

3. After the war, the black market was suppressed by the creation of a free market, but prices on the latter were about the same as those on the black market. Ordinary people, as a rule, could not afford to buy.

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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4. Coupons for clothing were discontinued in 1951 and the government announced, with great fanfare, that clothing prices were to be reduced. This was a false promise, however. Prices were reduced slightly but only on goods sold on the free market, i.e., goods which the average citizen could not afford to buy. Salaries were increased but not in proportion to the high prices. The Communists held many meetings to explain price reductions and salary increases, hailing these steps as a great success for the new Socialist society. The people realized that all of this was a Communist bluff but did not dare express their dissatisfaction, and applauded the "grandiose" accomplishments of the People's Democracy. This was nothing in comparison with the currency reform and the complete liquidation of the coupon system of 11 May 1952. According to the Communists, this was another step forward in the march toward the real paradise - true Communism.
5. The official rate for the monetary reform was set at four per cent but the money was actually changed at the rate of one per cent, that is, one new lev for 100 old leva. The rates differed for bank deposits, ranging from four per cent to one per cent. If one had a bank account of 100,000 leva, the exchange rate was three per cent. This made the situation worse than before. Under the coupon system, one could buy consumer goods at moderate prices, although it was difficult to get along on a small salary. None of these reforms benefited the population.
6. A true picture of living conditions in Bulgaria in June 1953 can best be gained from an estimate of wages and salaries in relation to their purchasing power. The average monthly salary for a white-collar worker or professor was from 500 to 600 leva; a gross salary of 600 leva per month was considered good. However, one's net salary was considerably less after taxes and payment of the compulsory government loan to which one had to subscribe every year a minimum of half a month's salary, payable in ten monthly installments. My gross salary was 800 leva per month. From this amount 90 leva were deducted for taxes, 50 leva for progressive income tax (progresivno podohoden danak) and 40 leva or five per cent for bachelor's tax (ergehski danak); in addition, 70 leva per month for ten months were deducted for subscription to the government loan, and eight leva per month for the workers' saving account (rabotnicheski vlog), which the worker could draw after five years; eight leva went for monthly trade union (Obsht Rabotnicheski Profesionalen Saiuz) dues to the Union of Social, Political, and Cultural Workers (Obshtestveno-Politicheski i Kulturni Rabotnitsi). The dues were apportioned on a progressive scale.
7. In May 1953 prices of consumer goods were as follows:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Approximate Price (leva)</u>
Black bread, kg.	2.80
White bread, kg.	3.80 - 4.80
Milk, lit.	3.20
Eggs, (each)	.80
Butter, kg.	30.
Cheese, kg.	25.
Sugar, kg.	10.
Beef, filet, kg.	17.
Beef, 2nd choice, kg.	16.
Mutton, 1st grade	16.80
Pork, 1st grade, kg.	20.
Chicken, dressed, kg.	20.
Fish, 2nd grade, kg.	12.
Potatoes, kg.	2.
Apples, 1st grade, kg.	4.

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<u>Item</u>	<u>Approximate Price (leva)</u>
Wine, 85 cl.	10.
Rayon, m.	60 - 70
Wool, medium grade, m.	200.
Cotton, mercerized, m.	40.
Cotton socks, pr.	30. - 35.
Rayon stockings, good, pr.	40.
Cotton dress	120.
Leather shoes	220.
Handbag, artificial leather	70. - 80.
Man's bicycle, 3 speeds	1,600.

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8. Even in a family where both husband and wife work, the combined salaries were scarcely adequate to cover the needs of a family with two children. There were many people who received high salaries, but these were almost all Communists or specialists who could not be replaced by Communists.
9. A student without money, whose behavior was irreproachable and whose grades were good, was entitled to a government stipend, but this stipend was not adequate. For example [redacted] a government stipend, which amounted to 5,000 leva per month before currency reform. [redacted] paid for [redacted] lunches and dinners in the student restaurant. The meals came to about 3,500 leva per month and the food was not very good. [redacted] the remaining 1,500 leva [redacted] paid for breakfasts, bought books and clothing, and paid for entertainment. The stipend was increased after the currency reform of 11 May 1952, but even then, in order to get along a student had to have an extra income. If he got a job, he could not be a regular student but had to continue his studies at the University by correspondence since regular students had to attend all classes. Correspondence students were not entitled to a government stipend. However, with their wages they got along better than with the stipend alone. Correspondence students generally received high grades.

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Trade Union Policy of the Bulgarian Communist Party and the Bulgarian Government

10. Up to 1952, office employees worked a 7½-hour day and a half day on Saturday. Workers had the right to change jobs, and in case of sickness, they received their full salary. In 1952, a new labor code was announced which equalized hours of work in all offices, plants, and factories. The work day was eight hours, six days a week. A worker while sick received compensation on a sliding scale. The minimum compensation was 50% of the worker's salary; if the employee had worked three years without interruption, he received 60% of his salary; for five years' uninterrupted work, he received 65% of his salary, and so on, up to a maximum of 90% of the salary; he never received 100% however.
11. A large number of meetings were held to explain the new labor code to laborers and white-collar workers as a new success of the People's Democracy, but the people were not fooled. The new code stripped them of all the privileges which they had had for a long time, even during the war.
12. Early in 1953, the National Assembly passed a new labor law, according to which no laborer or white-collar worker had the right to change his job of his own free will. Students who completed university studies did not have the right to choose their jobs. Upon graduation, they were assigned work by the various ministries, in accordance with each ministry's own plans; for example, medical

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students were at the disposition of the Ministry of Public Health.

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Almost all

were reluctant to go to places to which they had been assigned by the Ministry. They feigned illness in order not to have to go to teach. The Minister had the right to punish a person who failed to report at the appointed place and had no valid excuse.

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the fine was a rather large sum of money. The same applied to students in other fields.

Influence of the Communist Party on the Daily Life of Bulgarians

13. This inability to choose their own jobs was not the only reason why a great number of young people avoided the teaching profession. Another reason was the fact that, in addition to his specialty, a professor also had to teach Communism. Thus, he was not only a teacher of French, German, chemistry, or natural sciences, but also a political instructor. He had to spy on his students and teach according to the instructions of the Bulgarian Communist Party. A teacher of French could not praise various French authors if they had been branded as bourgeois. A professor of natural sciences had to guard what he said about MORGAN. The most he could say about him was that he was an idealist, a reactionary in science. Teachers had to speak against Anglo-American imperialists who wanted to start a new world war, to soak the entire world in blood for the sole purpose of making money, and to prevent our peaceful building of a People's Democracy. Teachers were not to forget to praise the Bulgarian Communist Party, the Party which was so wisely leading our country toward Socialism, nor must they neglect to mention the great movement, headed by the great Soviet Union, of peoples for the defense of peace. They also had to mention the brotherhood and friendship existing between the peoples of Bulgaria and the great Soviet Union and the help which the Soviet Union was extending to Bulgaria toward the building of Socialism. Finally, they had to stress the fact that the enemy had not yet been defeated and that he was trying to retard and prevent the Bulgarian people's march toward Socialism. Teachers therefore had to urge their students to be vigilant and to unmask the enemies of the people. In short, the teachers had to urge their students to inform even against their own parents. Students were taught to follow blindly the line of the Communist Party, which was always right and whose only aim was the prosperity of the Fatherland. A teacher who told his students all kinds of lies about the free world, for example that the West is degenerate, that its art is degrading, and that it is preparing a war against Bulgaria, was considered a good teacher.
14. Work in business offices and factories generally began at 0730 hours in summer, at 0800 in winter, and lasted until 1630 or 1700 hours. One hour, from 1200 to 1300, was allowed for lunch. The labor code prohibited longer working hours but one often had to stay late to finish one's work. Yet even if a person did finish his work at 1700 hours, he was not really free. He had to attend a union meeting or some other meeting, such as the meeting of the Circle for Political Education, at which were discussed the history of the Soviet Communist Party, the history of the Bulgarian

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Communist Party, political economy, the great constructions of Communism in the Soviet Union, the problems of socialism in the Soviet Union, etc. These meetings were held at least twice a week and lasted at least two hours. One had to watch one's words and show a Communist viewpoint during these discussions. Thus, at about 1900 hours, one left the office. After these meetings, there were often meetings in private homes; they started at 1900 or 1930 hours and lasted until 2100 hours. Or there might also be a meeting of another circle for discussions of protection against chemical warfare, first-aid measures, or similar subjects. These meetings were also held at least twice a week.

15. If a person were free after work, he could go to the cinema, but most of the films shown were produced in the USSR or one of the Satellites and were full of propaganda. Austrian or Italian films were shown occasionally and were very popular, since they contained so little propaganda. There were only four places in Sofia where one could dance and these were always overcrowded. It was impossible to talk freely in any restaurant since no one knew who might be at the next table. The newspapers contained nothing but a rehashing of the stock Communist cliches, e.g., attacks on the imperialists who wanted to start a war, articles against TITO and the Greek and Turkish fascists, reports of trials of spies and traitors in the service of imperialists, and, of course, praises of the great successes of the People's Democracies. The radio had nothing different to offer. The only relief from this monotony was the opportunity to listen to VOA broadcasts, but this required caution and discretion. Windows had to be closed and the radio volume turned down. It is difficult for outsiders to imagine with what impatience we awaited broadcasts from the West, which gave us hope and strength.
16. In spite of eight years of Communist tyranny, the population still has hope and that hope is sustained by western broadcasts, especially VOA and Radio Free Europe. Only a person who has lived under a Communist dictatorship can fully understand its meaning and have a burning desire to fight against it. The people have no arms. Their only defense is their refusal to believe the lies fabricated by the Bulgarian Communist Party and published in the Communist press. The people hope and believe that the day will come when the Bulgarian nation will join the great family of freedom-loving Western democracies.

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